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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 002230

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ETTC](#) [KOMC](#) [MASS](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: BRIEF DISCUSSION OF BLUE LANTERN WITH SENIOR
MILITARY

REF: ALGIERS 2058

Classified By: Ambassador Richard W. Erdman for reasons 1.4 (b) (d)

REF: Algiers

11. (C) At President Bouteflika's annual November 1 reception commemorating the declaration of the War of Liberation, Ambassador had an opportunity to raise the Blue Lantern issue with both Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gait-Salah and Ministry of Defense Secretary General Senhadji. With both, Ambassador expressed concern that this issue, though relatively minor and technical in nature, could have concrete and serious consequences for our military cooperation if left unresolved.

Ambassador noted that we had been obliged to suspend licensing action on current and potential contracts and this was good for neither Algeria nor the United States. Precisely because what we were asking was so non-obtrusive -- essentially a letter confirming receipt of the equipment in question -- we were frankly perplexed. We had a legal obligation to protect sensitive U.S. technology and in this case what we were asking of Algeria was nothing more than we routinely asked even our closest allies like the United Kingdom. We were especially perplexed because up until a year ago Algeria had cooperated with the Blue Lantern program.

12. (C) Gaid-Salah commented that the Algerian military staff had given the green light to begin discussions of our next joint military exercises in February, but made no comment on Blue Lantern beyond saying the issue was discussed.

Senhadji, with whom Ambassador had a longer conversation, noted that Algerian Ambassador Kherbi had just met with A/S Rodman on this and other issues. He confirmed the issue was under discussion but seemed to downplay it, noting it was a "minor" issue that would hopefully be resolved. Ambassador agreed it was a relatively minor issue but said it was increasingly urgent and would have substantial, concrete consequences for our cooperation if it was not resolved. Specifically, it would impact on our ability to provide or approve avionics upgrades for Algeria's C-130s. Without these upgrades, these planes would not meet new aviation standards taking effect in 2007 and thus, would no longer be able to fly in European air space. Similarly, Spain would not be able to deliver the CASA planes Algeria had purchased because of sensitive U.S. technological components. Finally, there was no way we would be able to proceed with more sophisticated sales like the Chinook if Algeria was not able to cooperate with even the minimal request we had made.

13. (C) Ambassador said we have repeatedly raised our Blue Lantern concerns over the past several months precisely because we wanted to avoid a situation where matters came to a head and we had to suspend action on licensing requests. The current suspension was not a matter of our trying to pressure Algeria but was a reflection of our legal obligation to protect sensitive U.S. technologies. In response to Ambassador's remark that Algeria had previously cooperated on Blue Lantern, Senhadji claimed they had done so on only one case. Ambassador said that was not his information and that he would double-check. (Comment: Embassy staff believes that since the program started in 2001, there have been four such Blue Lantern requests in which Algeria cooperated.)

14. (C) Ambassador said he has requested a meeting with MOD Minister-Delegate Guenaizia. Given the potentially serious consequences of not resolving this minor issue, Ambassador said he had a responsibility to ensure directly that there was no misunderstanding at senior levels about the situation and implications for our military cooperation. Ambassador noted that he had been among those supporting expanded U.S.-Algerian military cooperation, and thus was especially disappointed Algeria had not been able to cooperate with this very minor request. Senhadji claimed the MOD appreciated Ambassador's strong support for moving in this direction and closed the conversation hoping the issue could be resolved.

15. (C) COMMENT: On November 6 Ambassador is hosting departing Presidential Chief of Staff Belkheir at a one-on-one lunch prior to his departure later in the week for Rabat, where he will take up his duties as Algeria's new ambassador. Ambassador intends to brief Belkheir in detail on the Blue Lantern issue, in hopes that he will weigh in with his colleagues in order to help put this problem behind us.

